DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 391 225 EA 027 239

AUTHOR Templeton, Rosalyn Anstine; Johnson, Celia E.
TITLE Making the School Environment Safe: Red Rose's Formula.
PUB DATE Apr 95
NOTE 32p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, April 18-22, 1995).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Aggression; Conflict Resolution; Disadvantaged Environment; *Educational Environment; Elementary Education; Quality of Working Life; School Safety; School Security; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Expectations of Students; *Teacher Student Relationship; *Violence; Work Environment

ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings of a study that investigated the factors perceived by teachers as significant to the development of a safer school-work environment. The case study involved a 4-year project to decrease school violence in an urban, elementary, Chapter 1 school. Data were obtained from administration of the school level Environment Questionnaire (ELEQ) to 35 prekindergarten through fourth grade teachers and interviews with teachers, students, and administrators. Findings indicate that under heavy work demands, teachers adopted survival strategies of operating without reserves of time and energy, "processing" curriculum, and working in isolation. However, these strategies created problems with students. To counter a lack of resources, teachers often spent their own money on school supplies. Teachers' supply-distribution strategies affected their perceptions of students, which in turn influenced students' behavior. Strategies were implemented to alleviate teacher stress and isolation, improve the distribution of resources, and provide support for students. Two tables and one figure are included. (Contains 29 references.) (LMI)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 391 225

Making the School Environment Safe
Red Rose's Formula

Rosalyn Anstine Templeton

and

Celia E. Johnson

College of Education and Health Sciences
Department of Teacher Education
Bradley University
Peoria, IL 61625

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, April 18-22, 1995

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
Minor changes have been made to
improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this
document do not necessarily represent
official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
R. Templeton

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EA 027 353

On an average day in the United States :

135,000 children bring a gun to school
10 children die from gunshots and 30 are wounded
211 children are arrested for drug abuse
1,295 teenagers give birth, and 2,795 get pregnant
1,512 teens drop out of school
1,849 children are abused or neglected
3,288 children run away from home
2,989 children see their parents divorce
(Children's Defense Fund, 1990)

(Cantrell, 1992, p.4)

And even more disturbing--"According to the 1994 report from the Children's Defense Fund, the number of children killed by guns from 1979 through 1991 exceeded the number of American soldiers lost in the Vietnam war" (Hill & Hill, 1994, p.14).

If your morning routine includes skimming the daily paper, the statistics listed above are probably not surprising. A casual skimming of the *Journal Star* revealed the following stories:

- Mother of three-month-old arrested and charged with murder, for throwing infant across the room--hitting a wall. The mother stated that the baby wouldn't nurse.

- Boyfriend charged with murder for beating the three-year-old son of his girlfriend. Although the boy had 120 fresh bruises on his body, the fatal injury was a severe blow to his abdomen that caused internal bleeding. Boyfriend said the boy messed his pants and he was trying to change him.

- Mother arrested and charged with murder, for the death of her five-year-old. Child had a severe blow to head that crushed skull. Mother stated that child kept begging for a toy at the store and she slapped her up side the head.

James M. Kauffman (1994) expresses his concern about children being raised in a violent society. He notes:

> We are in no danger of becoming a nation of wimps; we are in imminent danger of becoming a nation of thugs. We know the details of violence among children and youth in our society. We recite the litany of this violence with shame, sorrow, disgust, and terror. For decades we have failed to act on what we know about the causes of violence and aggression. We cannot afford to delay effective action any longer (p.8).

PURPOSE

> **Our world is awash in violence. And no one is suffering more than our children (Molnar, 1992, p.5).**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors which teachers, in an urban school, described as significant to the development of a safer school work environment. Red Rose, like many city schools, is plagued with an increasing number of students and sometimes parents using aggressive behavior to solve problems at school, home, and in the neighborhood. As the initial step in a four-year project to decrease school violence, Red Rose's School Improvement Committee (SIC) believed an assessment of the school work environment was needed. Therefore, the focus of this study was twofold. The first goal was to compare what Red Rose Primary teachers believed were important factors in developing a secure, productive school environment to the school environment they actually worked in. Second, using information resulting from the *School Level Environment Questionnaire* (*SLEQ*) (Fisher & Fraser, 1990), the SIC wanted guidance in developing a plan that would decrease aggression.

For this research project, "violence" was defined as both physical and psychological aggression that was directed toward others. More specifically, any

physical aggression (hitting, kicking, biting, and shoving), vandalism (destruction of property), verbal harassment and/or intimidation (name calling, ridicule, and cursing) that took place in or around the school was considered school violence (Stephens, 1994).

PERSPECTIVES

> **Teacher stress and alienation from the profession . . . are at an all time high, judging from the increasing demand for workshops on coping with stress (Fullan, 1991, p.117).**

Monitoring the halls at Red Rose in search of students or teachers who might need support, I came upon Ms. Bind and Timothy. It was lunch time and Ms. Bind seemed anxious to begin her break, but Timothy stood immobile and rigid to her gentle suggestion to catch up with peers, who were heading toward the lunch room. He stood steadfast, with his head down and an angry look on his face. With exasperation in her voice, Ms. Bind quickly explained that she didn't know why Timothy was upset, and that she needed to do some errands during her lunch time. With some reassurance from me, Ms. Bind hurried down the hall. I decoded Timothy's body language : "Tim, you look pretty angry. Would you like to talk about it?" He responded, "Fuckn' bitch, get out of my face!" Physically, I gave him space and stood silently. He became uncomfortable with the silence and the scene in the hall among peers and agreed to come to the support room. Once in the room, I reiterated, "You look angry. Can I help?" He glared at me with hatred and proceeded to kick chairs over, throw books, and call me obscene names.

Is this an unusual example of a student using aggression to express his anger? Not according to many professionals examining the topic of school violence. To illustrate, Clementine Barfield founder of Save Our Sons and Daughters (SOSAD) notes, "80 percent of the youngsters in Detroit's public schools have either lost someone to gun violence or knows of someone who has" (Harrington-Lueker, 1992, p.26). Additionally, in the 1991-92 school year, the director of security in Prince George's County Public Schools in Maryland reports that they have had "two attempted homicides, a 200

percent increase in firearms possessions, and a 94 percent increase in knife possessions" (Rotondo, 1992, p.40). Furthermore, writing about school violence in Washington, DC, Franklin L. Smith (1994) states, "In the 1993-94 school year, DC Public School personnel confiscated 32 guns, dealt with 59 physical assaults against teachers and students, and examined seven shootings in and around the schools" (p.35).

Some professionals believe the "problems of violence and crime are becoming commonplace in American schools" (Hatkoff, 1994, p.283). Supporting this notion, Mary M. Wood and Nicholas J. Long (1991) say, "The decay and dysfunction of the family and the shocking social problems in communities have created a new level of deviancy and disturbance never before seen by educators and other adults who work with children and youth" (p.xi). Violence, as a way to solve problems at school, home and in the neighborhood has become commonplace (Wood & Long, 1991).

More recently, school violence is causing educators an even graver concern because younger children are displaying aggressive behavior. For years violence was considered a middle and high school problem; however, "educators, mental health specialists, preschool workers, and parents now say aggressive behavior is becoming more prevalent among children 10 years old and under" (Sauerwein, 1995, p.23). To address the problem of aggression exhibited in younger children, Chicago city schools have adopted a curriculum "Choosing Non-Violence" (CNV) for their primary schools. A Chicago primary teacher shares that when she had her students develop a list of ways they used to express strong feelings, children gave extremely violent responses, such as breaking windows, tearing up important items, beating up younger children, and destroying their own valued art work (Parry, 1994).

Do schools have a serious problem? Some educators say, "Yes." For example, Smith (1994) notes, "School violence is one of the greatest challenges facing educators and society in general today" (p. 37). However, many schools are taking on the challenge and are attempting to find solutions to the problem of school violence. Some

educational leaders see school violence as a surface issue and therefore base solutions at the school's front door. A superintendent in one such school district notes: "Today, metal detectors, police officers also figure in the picture, creating a new reality for many school districts across the nation. . . " (Smith, 1994, p.35). Again, believing school violence is a physical problem, Donna Harrington-Lueker (1992) explains why gun control laws are needed. She states, "Without such controls, schools must fall back instead on locker searches, weapons sweeps, million-dollar police forces, and even metal detectors" (p.24).

Nevertheless, other professionals view school violence as a "deep-rooted" social problem--one woven into the fabric of society. Solutions from this perspective lean toward building awareness and meeting children's basic needs in school settings. To illustrate a society oriented view of school violence, Amy Hatkoff (1994) says, "Schools across the U.S. are developing and expanding their community service programs. By participating in community services, students develop their sense of social values, responsibility and cooperation" (p.284). Jo Anna Natale (1994) believes a school's responsibility in curbing violence should be to teach new skills. She states, "The school's role can be a powerful one : helping children unlearn aggression and antisocial behavior by substituting constructive messages about caring, sharing, empathy, and cooperation. And the earlier these messages come into a child's life, the better they will stick" (p.39).

Are children and youth born aggressive or do they learn aggression? Furthermore, why are students of all ages in alarmingly increasing numbers, resorting to using guns, knives, fists and other forms of aggression? Lester and Irene David (1980) believe that "schools are a reflection of the outside world, and the rages, frustrations, and inequities that students see and feel in that world spill over into the school yard" (p. 6). Carla Hannaford (1990) sees violence as a response to stress. She calls young people exposed to abusive or chaotic environments stressed out, survival

oriented humans (SOSOH) who exhibit hyperactivity, attention problems, disruptive behavior, learning difficulties, impulsivity, aggression and social problems. Looking at school violence from another perspective, Adria Steinberg (1991) notes that aggressive youth view violence as the only way to resolve even the most mundane problems. She states, "Aggressive youth tend to attribute hostility to others, search for few facts in trying to understand a situation, and have difficulty envisioning alternative solutions, especially nonviolent ones" (p.1).

Whatever the reasons for violence, administrators and teachers at Red Rose Primary School, strongly believe they need to find ways to alleviate stress and provide a sense of balance and security for their potentially aggressive students

METHODS

> **To be alienated is to lack a sense of belonging, to feel cut off from family, friends, school or work -- the four worlds of childhood (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p.430).**

This study involved 39 teachers who taught in preK to 4th grade classrooms which contained approximately 25 to 30 students. Red Rose Primary was considered a Chapter 1 school because of a high incident of students (84%) living in low-income families. With predominantly African American students, Red Rose was located on the south side of the city in a neighborhood that consisted of small, single dwelling homes.

This research project utilized both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to assess the learning environment. Initially, surveys to assess the school environment were distributed and then analyzed. Second, examining artifacts, interviews, and observations were used to clarify any questions that surfaced from questionnaire results. In addition, descriptive information was used to gain an in-depth look at

feelings, values, beliefs and experiences -- in other words, was used to present a vivid picture and interpretation of school and classroom life.

School Environment Assessment

Red Rose teachers were asked to complete the *SLEQ* developed by Fisher and Fraser (1990). Based partially on Rudolph H. Moos's (1987) research in various work environments, the *SLEQ* was designed to correspond to Moos's three psychosocial dimensions of Relationship, Personal Development, and System Maintenance/System Change. The *SLEQ* has two scales (Student Support and Affiliation) that measure Relationship Dimensions, one scale (Professional Interest) that measures Personal Development, and five scales (Staff Freedom, Participatory Decision Making, Innovation, Resource Adequacy, and Work Pressure) that measure System Maintenance and System Change. The 56 items on each form (*Actual* and *Preferred*) were analyzed using a five-point scale. Scoring for 27 of the 56 items ranged from 5 for Strongly Agree to 1 for Strongly Disagree, and 29 items were scored using an opposite scale--1 for Strongly Agree to 5 for Strongly Disagree.

As noted by Fisher and Fraser (1990), the *SLEQ* allows for assessment of subtle aspects of teachers' professional lives such as work pressure, affiliation and staff freedom. Reliability and validity for the *SLEQ* have been established with three samples from Australian Schools. Table l clarifies the meaning of the eight scales by providing a scale description and a sample item for each scale. Questionnaires were distributed to a faculty of 39, with a 100 percent response rate. Once questionnaires were returned, aggregated scores were figured, averages calculated and profiles developed.

Table 1:

Description of Scales in the *SLEQ*

Name of Scale	Description of Scales	Sample Item
Student Support	There is good rapport between teachers and students and students behave in a responsible self-disciplined manner.	Most students are helpful and cooperative to teachers. (+)
Affiliation	Teachers can obtain assistance, advice and encouragement and are made to feel accepted by colleagues.	I feel accepted by other teachers. (+)
Professional Interest	Teachers discuss professional matters, show interest in their work and seek further professional development.	Teachers avoid talking with each other about teaching and learning. (-)
Staff Freedom	Teachers are free of set rules, guidelines and procedures, and of supervision to ensure rule compliance.	I am not expected to conform to a particular teaching style. (+)
Participatory Decision Making	Teachers have the opportunity to participate in decision making.	I have to refer even small matters to a senior member of staff for a final answer. (-)
Innovation	The school is in favor of planned change, experimentation, classroom openness, and individualization.	Teachers are encouraged to be innovative in this school. (+)
Resource Adequacy	Support personnel, facilities, finance, equipment and resources are suitable and adequate.	The supply of equipment and resources is inadequate. (-)
Work Pressure	The extent to which work pressure dominates the school environment.	Teachers have to work long hours to complete all their work. (+)

Items marked with a (+) are scored 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively for the responses Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Items designated (-) are scored in the reverse manner. Omitted or invalid responses are scored 3. The School-Level Environment Questionnaire was developed by Darrell Fisher & Barry Fraser.

Interpretive Research Methodology

To supplement the *SLEQ* and shed light on questions that surfaced while analyzing the data, an interpretive research methodology similar to that employed by Erickson (1986) was used in this study. Although 100 percent (39) of the teachers responded to the *SLEQ*,, approximately 50 percent (20) of the teachers volunteered to complete interviews. Additionally, once a plan was outlined and the beginning stages

were implemented, interviews of teachers, administrators, and students were conducted.

FINDINGS

> **Alienated children and youth are assigned a multitude of labels, most of them unfriendly (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p.6).**

Results of the *SLEQ* (discussed below) were used by Red Rose's SIC to develop a four-year, school-wide plan that would decrease violence and therefore, create a safe and secure school environment.

SLEQ Data Analysis

Table 2 provides the means and standard deviations of each of the eight scales contained within the *SLEQ*. The values of the mean correlation of the scales shown in Table 2 range from 14.2 (Student Support) to 27.5 (Affiliation) for the *Actual* sample and from 17.8 (Work Pressure) to 31.1 (Affiliation & Resource Adequacy) for the *Preferred* sample. The standard deviations from the *Actual* form appears to be spread rather wide which indicated that teachers at Red Rose held very different perceptions of the same work climate. Nonetheless, teachers were in more agreement when it came to developing a picture of the ideal school environment, as evidenced by the standard deviations calculated from the *Preferred* forms.

Table 2:

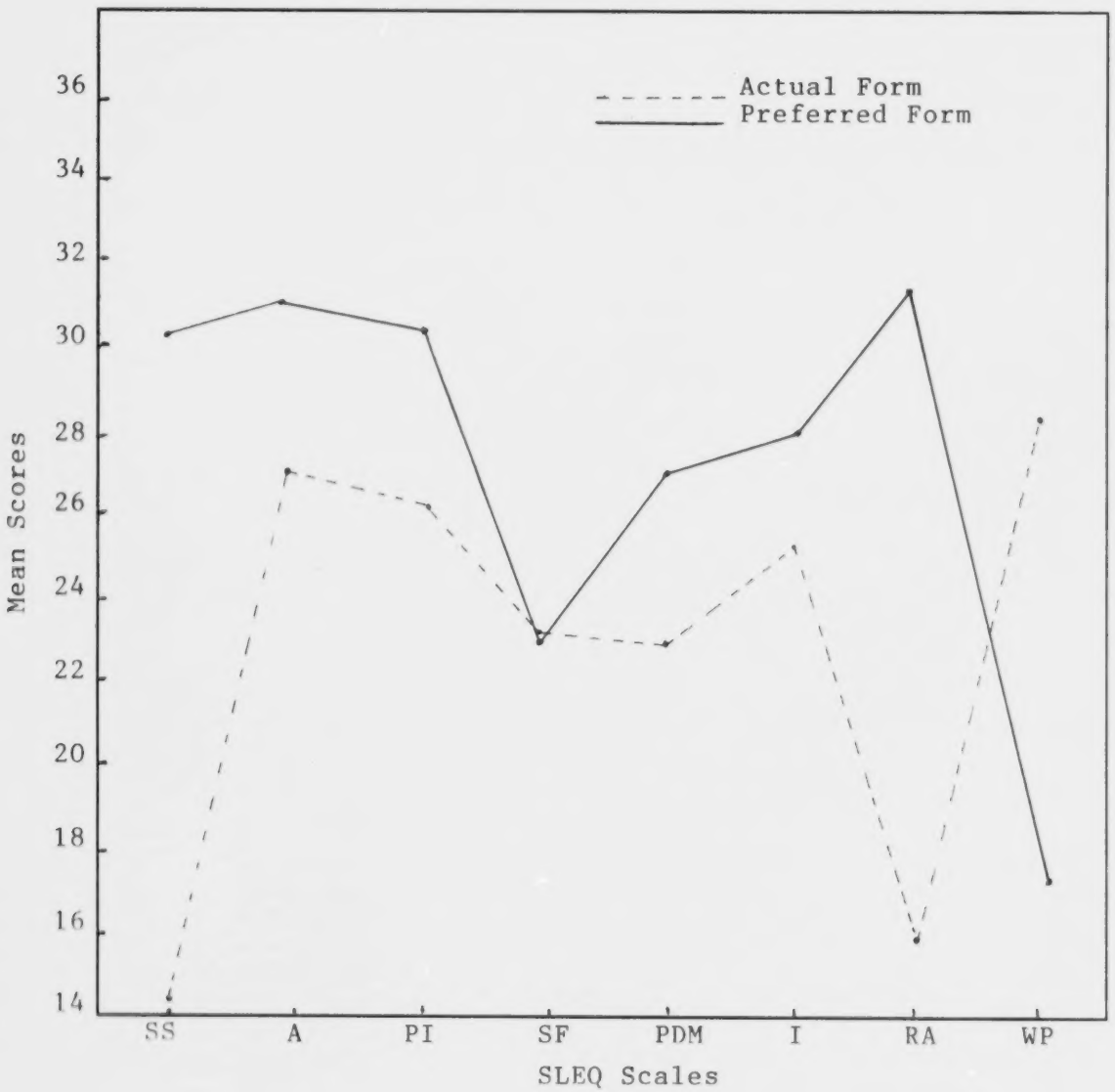
Descriptive Statistics for *Actual* and *Preferred* Versions of *SLEQ* for Teachers at Red Rose Primary School

Scale	Mean		Standard Deviation	
	Actual	*Preferred*	*Actual*	*Preferred*
Student Support	14.2	30.6	5.7	3.4
Affiliation	27.5	31.1	4.8	4.0
Professional Interest	26.5	30.6	3.4	4.2
Staff Freedom	23.7	23.2	5.4	3.9
Participatory Decision Making	23.0	27.4	3.8	4.0
Innovation	25.0	28..7	3.5	3.7
Resource Adequacy	15.9	31.1	4.0	3.6
Work Pressure	28.6	17.8	3.4	3.3

The profiles pictured in Figure 1 shows some interesting patterns. When comparing the mean scores of respondents in each of the eight dimensions, there were sizable score differences between *Actual* and *Preferred* forms in the areas of Student Support, Resource Adequacy, and Work Pressure, respectively. The dimensions with the closest mean scores were Staff Freedom, Affiliation, and Innovation.

Figure 1

Profiles of Mean School Environment Scores on the *SLEQ* for Red Rose Primary Teachers



As evidenced by examining the profiles above, teachers wanted students to be more responsible and self-disciplined than they currently were. Red Rose teachers, in

addition, desired a better rapport with their students. Yet, why were students irresponsible and impulsive? And, if they wanted to, why couldn't teachers develop positive teacher-student rapport?

Resource Adequacy was another area of concern for this group of teachers. Using the description of this scale on page 8 as a guide, it showed that teachers were not happy with existing support personnel, facilities, finances, equipment and/or resources. More specifically, however, what did teachers feel deprived of? Did the lack of these resources influence their teaching?

Finally, Figure 1 profiles pictured a large gap between the scale of Work Pressure on the *Actual* and *Preferred* forms. With such a discrepancy in scores, it can be assumed that teachers experienced too much pressure and desired less. Yet, what was causing the work pressure--students, parents, administrators, etc.? As stated earlier, questions that surfaced while analyzing the results of the *SLEQ* were answered by interviews, observations and examining the artifacts of Red Rose.

Even before the results of the *SLEQ* and its scales were shared, administrators and teachers were concerned about the increasing aggression among students. Because of this concern, the principal and the SIC had begun examining several programs (Conflict Resolution, Peer Mediation, Choosing Non-Violence, etc.) that could be used at Red Rose. The low Student Support score on the *SLEQ* was the catalyst that ignited action, and with Chapter 1 funds, they hired a support teacher. The support teacher, was trained by a professor from a local university to use Life Space Intervention (LSI) (Wood & Long, 1991) problem solving techniques with aggressive, passive-aggressive, and withdrawn students.

In addition to training, the LSI professor set up a support room, developed the required paper work (referral forms, debriefing forms, support teacher's log book, etc.), and informed and coached teachers on how to make effective use of the support teacher's services. It was planned that during the second year, teachers who

volunteered would receive a modified LSI training to use in their classrooms, and during the third year, LSI parent classes would be offered.

Interpretive Analysis

The Whys? What Red Rose Teachers Have to Say.

It is the end of the school day, and I am walking down second grade hall. Teachers are rushing students. Students are noisily filling book bags, grabbing coats, slamming metal lockers, and bumping into each other. Two teachers are watching from their doorways, one is in her room not watching, and two are in the hall yelling warnings and threats.

> "I told you to line up. Do it or you'll go to the office!"
>
> "You're going to miss your bus, again. And your mom's not going to be happy about having to come and pick you up."
>
> "What are you doing in that line? You don't ride the bus!"

As I walk by, one teacher gives me recognition by shaking her head, holding a rigid frown and rolling her eyes. She says in a hushed voice, "Can you believe these kids?" I smile and respond, "Looks like you have to keep on your toes." I head down the stairs and proceed down fourth grade hall. The noise is different. Teachers stand in their doorways and watch as students hurriedly prepare to leave. Occasionally, a student comes with arms loaded to ask a question, and a teacher answers, while at the same time, telling other students, "See you tomorrow.".

* * * *

Assertion 1: At Red Rose, teachers' attitudes influence how they interact with students.

Unanimously, teachers believe that many of their students act irresponsible and impulsive. When I ask what types of behaviors are seen, teachers say students often talk-back, use rude and disrespectful language, argue, refuse to do what is asked, and when upset, leave the room or school without permission. To "why?"--teachers respond that students learn the behavior from their homes and communities. They explain :

> "Kids here are aggressive--lots of violent talk from the outside that they bring in here. They don't listen to you. They're disrespectful. Why . . ? They run over adults in their households so try it here."
>
> "As a new teacher, I feel I have never been introduced to kids having so many problems with behavior and neglect. They have more needs than one teacher can handle. So they act out to try to get what they need from the teacher."
>
> "Kids come like they are--very needy emotionally and academically. They're deprived emotionally and need attention so come in bad moods."

Wood & Long (1991) confirm what Red Rose teachers believe--adults' modeling is a powerful teacher. The authors tell us that our classrooms have many students who come to school struggling with their own painful realities. Children's minds are consumed with such problems as alcoholism, drugs, crime, parental neglect, abandonment, brutality, and poverty.

It is interesting that even though all teachers witness disrespectful student behaviors, not all of them directly experience this type of treatment from students. I ask this group of teachers, "Why don't kids treat you rudely?" Answers vary but hold a common thread--these teachers believe that developing positive relationships with their students is important. Their beliefs in positive relationships are reflected in their

following comments :

> "I look at what the kids have to deal with and try to create a place where they can just be kids again."
>
> "The kids know I like them. (Why?) I smile . . . I do or give them little things that make them feel special."
>
> "I talk with my fourth-graders and really listen. They need that."

Through observations and informal interviews, it becomes apparent that teachers with positive teacher-student relationships have the skill of not judging students based on their inappropriate behavior. Teachers do not take inappropriate behavior personally but look beyond the behavior and try to find ways to help the child. Because they "walk in their students' shoes" or are empathic, teachers and students have reciprocal respect for each other. Jones & Jones, authors of *Comprehensive Classroom Management* verify the importance of teachers creating positive interpersonal relationships with students. They say, "The quality of teacher-student relationships has a great influence on the amount of productive or disruptive behavior students display in a school setting (1995, p.63). By improving the quality of our interactions with students, we can significantly increase the amount of productive student behavior" (1990, p.66"). Or to say it less technically, "When kids feel right, they'll behave right" (Faber, Mazlish, Nyberg, & Anstine Templeton, 1995, p.3).

One snowy, January morning while sitting in a rather chilly support room, I listen while the support teacher has the following conversation with an angry second-grader.

Support Teacher: (Looks up to see Fred walking through the door)

Fred, you're back to see me ? How Come ? What's going on ?

Fred has already been to the support room two times that morning. Support teacher has used Life Space (LSI) problem solving steps to show him how his anger from home is causing him problems in school.

Fred: (With an angry look, he shrugs his shoulders and hands the support teacher a note from his teacher.)

The note reads: "I know you've already seen him twice, but he keeps arguing and arguing. I'm tired of it. "

Support Teacher: I can tell something is bothering you. You've been here twice and that anger keeps coming back.

Fred: No I'm not. . . I wanted to do my work. I didn't have a pencil. She told me to go to my desk and do my stuff and. . . I tried to tell her. . . she wouldn't listen. I just wanted a pencil !

The Support teacher finishes talking with Fred. He tells her that it is his lunch time. She takes Fred to lunch room and gets him settled. Next, the Support teacher finds Fred's teacher in the faculty lounge.

Support Teacher: (Sits in chair by teacher) I took Fred to his class in the lunch room.

Teacher: (Shaking head in disgust) What's wrong with him this time?

Support Teacher: Nothing. Said he wanted to work but didn't have a pencil.

Teacher: (looking guilty) I thought he was just coming to my desk to argue again. You know. . . I get so tired of these kids coming to school without pencils and paper. I've already gone through this year's supply and now I have to buy material with my own money.

* * * *

Assertion 2: With resources lacking, teachers use three different styles of sharing with students.

The situation pictured above is not atypical of Red Rose. Pencils and paper are coveted items and, at times, cause major battles between students and teachers. Teachers overwhelmingly agree that they do not have enough materials (pencils, crayons, paper, folders, scissors, glue, rulers, and Kleenex) to teach effectively. But amusedly there is an over abundance of paper clips, rubber bands, envelopes, and other office-type supplies coming from the central office. How about books? Many teachers say their grade level texts are worthless because their students are not even close to grade level. Lack of equipment is another bleak situation--two VCR's, and a handful of overhead projectors for 39 teachers. Computers, even archaic ones, are non-existent.

The solution? The solution for all teachers at Red Rose is the same--use personal income to purchase materials needed to teach effectively. Effective teaching for some teachers means buying only the necessities--paper and pencils and occasionally a box of tissue. Whereas, other teachers spend hundreds of dollars per year buying not only primary school supplies, but books, games, posters, stickers, and ready-made bulletin board decorations.

Although all teachers are willing to spend personal income for school materials, there appears to be three systems of sharing in place at Rose--reluctant sharing, free sharing, and responsible sharing. Teachers who share materials reluctantly spend a great deal of time policing or keeping track of their items. Pencils and other supplies never become the property of the students, and teachers constantly ask, "Where's my pencil ? You better not lose it." Students have to ask (and at times beg) teachers for pencils and paper. A teacher's reluctance is highlighted in her following comment :

> I'm tired of it. These kids don't appreciate a thing. They expect us to buy the stuff their parents should buy. And all they do is destroy or lose it. We're just creating products of the system. They'll grow up and do the same thing.

With free sharing, teachers receive pleasure from providing students with needed school items. Items are given with no ultimatums or conditions, and students seldom have to ask for pencils and paper--teachers usually make central locations for these materials. One senses that having needed supplies is a right rather than a privilege. In addition, teachers look for opportunities to treat students special--giving sticker books, fancy stickers, candy, toys, etc. It is clear that free sharing teachers spend large sums of money on their students. One teacher discusses the amount she spends--she says, "You should see my checkbook--twenty here and fifty there, but I knew what I was getting into when I took a job in a Chapter 1 school, and it really doesn't bother me." An attitude that reflects free sharing is captured in the following teacher's remarks:

> I don't think kids should have to worry and fret over every little pencil. I know some act like a crime has been committed when a kid has lost a pencil. But, I really enjoy buying treats and things for my students. They usually never get much, and they're always so appreciative.

Teachers who use the strategy of responsible sharing develop systems that help students learn responsibility, while allowing teachers to be compensated for some of their expenses. One teacher describes her plan. She explains :

> It took me a while to figure out what to do. I didn't want to give students the impression they could lose or destroy materials anytime. Yet I didn't want them to think that I'd punish them, either. Now, I allow students to purchase needed items in our class store each morning. At first, I worried that the kids wouldn't have the money--wrong. They always seem to have a nickel or a dime in their pockets. For five cents, they can buy a pencil or three crayons or 20 sheets of paper. For larger items (scissors), they can rent them from the store for three cents an hour. Students take care of managing the store. And I use the money earned to buy more supplies. If kids don't want to buy items or can't, they can borrow from peers or me.

Another teacher tells us why she decided to use a system of responsible sharing.

She says, "At first it was okay, but eventually I became resentful of always spending money on my students, so I developed a plan where kids do chores to earn items." Her students clean cupboards, grade papers, straighten bookshelves, put up bulletin boards, clean the teacher's closet, and even paint the cupboard doors bright colors. Students keep time cards and buy items according to the amount of time they have worked. The teacher still has to buy items but states, "At least now I feel like I'm money ahead, because I don't have to spend time doing the things I hate. And to me, time is money."

It is the end of a hectic week and the support teacher and I are involved in a casual conversation. She says :

> You know this school has had so many principals, and teachers are wondering if Tom is going to stay. They really need someone like him to stay around for awhile. So many good things have happened. We're getting help with the kids, so teachers are able to get more work done and don't have to spend so much time fighting students. And, some of the teachers. . . the new ones anyway. . . are getting together after school to talk. I've even been asked to go with them after school. Can you imagine. . .an old woman like me going out with those young teachers? But I'll have fun.
>
> Me: Didn't any of the old teachers get together and do things, before?
>
> Support teacher: No. . . I've been teaching here a long time and nobody seemed to do much. We were all too busy and didn't have much time.

* * * *

Assertion 3: Because of heavy task demands, teachers employ three work conservation strategies to survive.

David J. Flinders (1987) in a study of two high schools indicates that because of increased demands on teaching--larger classes, fewer funds, expanded curriculum, and

more committee work, "teachers must rationalize their work as a matter of producing the best possible results under difficult circumstances" (p.206). Red Rose teachers are also struggling with this "task-resource dilemma" (p.207) and use professional survival strategies, which unknowingly create learning environments that are often times hectic, rigid and cold.

Red Rose teachers, like Flinders' teachers, work in less than ideal conditions--there is never enough time and teachers are worn out from trying to keep up with task demands. Because survival becomes the goal under heavy work demands, Red Rose teachers lose sight of the most important reason to teach--creating environments where students can thrive academically and emotionally. In addition to being academically needy, Red Rose's students are emotionally needy. Nevertheless, teachers do not meet students' basic emotional needs because they work without reserves of time or energy, which means there is nothing left to give. The conflict between meeting children's basic psychological needs and meeting demands of work is reflected in the following teachers' comments:

> "They have more needs than one teacher can handle. So they act out to try to get what they need from the teacher."

> "I do all this stuff. I'm always running around telling kids, 'You look angry. What's wrong?' But isn't there ever a time to just do math or reading? . . . I know . . . you're going to say--that kids'll refuse to do it because of their strong feelings."

What Red Rose's teachers do not understand (or in some cases choose to ignore) is what research (Jones and Jones, 1995) tells us--with positive teacher-student relationships comes increased academic achievement and productive behavior. Furthermore, when children have their basic emotional needs met, they achieve academically and socially. It is clear that teachers at Red Rose are in a difficult conflict

cycle (Long & Duffner, 1980)--no time is given to the affective side of the child, so students act in impulsive and aggressive ways to get their psychological needs met.

A second survival strategy used at Red Rose is to dilute the curriculum by using only basal texts for lessons and work book pages for practice. Restricting teaching and learning to this narrow level of intellectual stimulation is what Flinders (1987) calls "processing" curriculum. Teachers justify this work conservation strategy by saying their students lack social and academic skills so need repetitive and structured learning. During observations, some students appear to be "brain dead" and are mechanically going through the routine of each day. While other students cannot tolerate the boredom and act out. And still others cannot read grade level texts, so fearing failure become disruptive. At this point, teachers are left with controlling behavior. However, with such a "curriculum of control" (Nichols, 1992) in place, teachers have little time or energy to learn a variety of teaching models, such as cooperative learning or to develop, enrich, or integrate the existing curricula.

By using this curriculum processing mode of teaching to survive, another layer is added to the conflict cycle between teachers and students. To illustrate : first, to conserve time and energy, teachers use a "watered down" style of teaching; second, students either fear failure or get bored so act out; third, when students act out, teachers spend time controlling children's behavior; and fourth, when too much time is used focusing on behavior, teachers do not have time to enrich teaching or learning--and the battle goes around and around. In other words, students feel teachers are mean and learning is worthless and boring; while teachers believe students are incorrigible and cannot learn. The dilemma of teachers having low student expectations and students suffering in insipid learning environments is depicted in the following statements from teachers:

"I can't keep kids on task now. When would I ever have time to do

cooperative learning or work social skills into social studies ?"

"My high point of the day is first period. I have the high group and at least these kids can think. . . And then it's down hill from there. For the rest of the day, the kids aren't too bright and can't do the work, so I spend the rest of the day dealing with behavior."

Along with operating without reserves of time or energy and processing curriculum, teachers at Red Rose have adopted a third survival strategy--isolation. Isolation as a work conservation strategy becomes apparent when the principal stops the school-wide faculty meetings and incorporates grade level meetings on a rotational schedule. Teachers begin to grumble. "This is the only time we can see each other." or "I don't understand why we need grade level meetings anyway." Apparently, they have become accustomed to socializing and miss the comradeship the large meetings provide. Many teachers believe isolation is needed to keep up with the paper work, as evidenced by the following comment : "If I hung around the halls all day, I'd never get anything done."

In this school, the self-imposed isolation is practiced more by seasoned teachers, rather than beginning teachers. Is isolation a survival strategy one learns over time or do Red Rose's novice teachers bring to their teaching the image of teacher as collaborator? New teachers often meet together after school to share ideas and get suggestions. Additionally, they gather on Fridays to put closure to their hectic week and plan for the coming week. Notwithstanding, one example of teachers working as team members is observed with the seasoned, second grade teachers. They have divided up their five classes into ability level groups for reading. This reorganization of reading provides opportunities for collaboration among teachers. Howbeit, it also creates friction from a few students in each class, who feel insecure about reading and resist leaving their home room peers and teachers. This situation is documented in the support teacher's log, and a quick glance will show that during the one hour reading

time (9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.) the support room is usually overflowing with second-graders.

If one listens to the inside shop-talk and school gossip, there seems to be two types of teachers at Red Rose. On the one hand, there are teachers who are sympathetic, develop positive relationships and have either a free style or a responsible style of sharing. While on the other hand, there are teachers who struggle by the hour with student behavior, show signs of "burn-out," and use a reluctant style of sharing. Interviews and observations illuminate both types of teachers at Rose. Nonetheless, both understanding teachers and misinformed teachers are seen employing work conservation strategies of processing curriculum and isolation to survive, but not all teachers ignore others--meaning to use the conservation strategy of operating without reserves of time or energy. This is not to imply that understanding teachers have more time and energy--they do not. They just make time for students and colleagues and are found on Saturdays or Sundays working in their rooms. In addition, because students' psychological needs are met, they are less likely to act out due to boredom or fear of failure--even if their teacher processes curriculum. On the other hand, misinformed teachers are not knowingly callous; they have been trapped into a destructive cycle of psychological abuse. In other words, teachers damage students' self-esteem, and students retaliate and damage teachers' self-worth--the cycle continues to escalate to unbelievable levels of cruelty.

CONCLUSION

Violence is a "national epidemic, and no one is spared the consequences of its evil" (Gorski and Pilotto 1993, p.35).

The guiding purpose of this study has been to assess the school environment of an urban school to illuminate what teachers felt to be important factors in developing a safer school work environment. On the following pages, the findings are discussed using three dimensions of the SLEQ--Student Support, Resource Adequacy, and Work Pressure. Although each scale may look like a separate area with isolated characteristics, all points discussed within the scales intertwine and overlap one another and should be viewed in such a light.

Total group scores on the *SLEQ* indicated that teachers at Red Rose wanted less work pressure, so adopted the work conservation strategies of working without reserves of time and energy, processing curriculum, and working in isolation in order to survive. Yet when work conservation strategies were used, problems with students surfaced. For example, teachers wanting to survive, used a curriculum processing mode of teaching. However, by just processing curriculum, some teachers created environments that were cold, fearful and/or boring, so students misbehaved. Yet, when students misbehaved, instead of examining their own pedagogy, teachers assumed students were impulsive, aggressive and unruly and would change their focus from teaching to controlling behavior. Furthermore, when a "curriculum of control" (more rules, with less freedom and dignity) was implemented, students rebelled against the rigidity and perceived teachers' meanness and became more aggressive.

Add to this bleak image--self-imposed isolation and what unfolds is the picture of a stressful and lonely work environment--where teachers fight students and try to get their work done and students fight teachers and try not to learn. A plan for decreasing work pressure was developed and then put into action by administrators doing the following : 1) allowing teachers a forum to voice concerns and offer solutions, 2) monitoring classrooms on rainy days, so teachers could take needed breaks, and 3) allowing teachers to leave school early on Friday's as compensation for working

overtime. To make Red Rose people feel a valuable part of the school and to begin to dissolve the isolation, a social committee was created to recognize school people on special occasions and to organize quarterly social potlucks.

Besides expressing concern over work pressure, *SLEQ* scores verified that teachers were concerned about the lack of resources available to them to effectively teach. Interpretive analysis showed that teachers used personal income to buy needed supplies. When sharing supplies with students, teachers used three styles of sharing . Some teachers were reluctant to share; while others freely shared. Still other teachers developed responsible sharing systems. For example, having students do chores to earn needed pencils and paper. Teachers who used reluctant sharing further reinforced students' beliefs that teachers were mean, and students responded with aggression such as breaking pencils and name-calling. A plan to improve resources was initiated and included equally distributing existing supplies among faculty, repairing broken equipment, assigning a "Bug" committee to provide follow-up on orders already placed, and developing a student store to name a few steps of action.

Finally, the area that caused teachers the gravest concern and initiated this study was students' aggressive behaviors. *SLEQ* scores showed that teachers as a total group believed that there was a definite lack of student support. Interviews indicated that teachers thought student aggression was coming from home and community. Observations and LSI sessions affirmed that students had often come to school angry and then would act in aggressive ways in the classroom. Howbeit, informal interviews and recorded LSI sessions verified that students more frequently became angry once they were at school. For example, according to the support teacher's log book from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., more students were seen than any other time during the day. This was Red Rose's rotational lunch and recess times, and students would frequently get upset with each other and use aggression to try to solve their problems. Still at other times, students became upset in the classroom and acted out because of boredom

or fear of failure, which was closely related to teachers using work conservation strategies to survive the task demands of teaching. However, by developing positive relationships with the support teacher and practicing problem solving strategies of LSI, students were learning more productive ways to cope with strong emotions. Teachers, over all, thought that the support teacher and Life Space Intervention strategies were working. The following is provided to highlight the success of one LSI session :

> Jeremiah who had come to school upset was refusing to work. He refused to talk when his teacher asked him about the problem. He disrupted others learning and was sent to the support room, where the university trainer used LSI strategies to get him to calm down and to problem solve. Feeling better, Jeremiah and the trainer walked back to his room. His teacher came to the door and LSI trainer quickly briefed her on the situation. Then the trainer asked, "What does Jeremiah need to do to get back into your program?" Looking at Jeremiah, the teacher responded, "Jeremiah, if you're ready to do your work, you can just go to your seat and get started." Jeremiah smiled and quickly rushed to his desk.
>
> Later that day, the LSI trainer overheard Jeremiah's teacher talking to a colleague, "I can't believe the change in Jeremiah. He came back like a different person. That angry look was gone and he was ready to work. I think this stuff really works . . . look how long it usually takes us to get him out of a bad mood, and she talks to him and he's back in twenty minutes--with a smile and ready to work."

Implications for Further Research

Observations verified that Red Rose's school environment was definitely in the midst of change--a process that will continue for the next several years. Nevertheless, no attention was given to how change can affect teachers, and they were not prepared for the amount of change they were experiencing. Teachers had mixed feelings and opinions. One teacher gave her impression of the change. She said, "Things here are happening too fast. We've a new principal, a support teacher, several school improvement committees, people from the university, and all of them want us to do

things differently. What's wrong with the way we were doing things, before ?"

Another teacher shared her perception of the school reform efforts. She noted:

> Wow! what a difference a year makes. We finally have a principal that supports us; we finally have help for needy kids; we finally have help for teachers who have difficult students--although I feel that the support teacher is being pulled from all sides. We're getting volunteers--before, nobody wanted to come into our school. . . Now, the university LSI person is here all the time, and we're getting more student teachers. I've been here twelve years and this is the first time I've been excited about coming to work, and I look forward to next year.

Still other teachers held cautious views of the changes taking place at Red Rose. One teacher shared her solicitous outlook--she said:

> You know, I've seen this kind of stuff come down the pike before, and it disappeared as quickly as it had appeared. I don't know if all the new stuff will last or not. We're all still wondering if (the new principal) will stay around. Maybe, if he does, things will get better. I've liked what I've seen so far.

To ensure that school reform is smoothly integrated into the school environment, administrators should address the stages of change that teachers may experience.

Further study will involve teachers completing the *SLEQ* as a post-test in June, 1995. Results will be used to reexamine the role of the support teacher, the use of Life Space Intervention techniques, and what progress, the plans to improve student support, resources, and work pressure are making. Additionally, students in selected classrooms will be given the *My Class Inventory* (Fraser, 1989) as pre and post tests to assess the relationship between students' perceptions of their classrooms and teachers' helping students deal with strong emotions by using LSI strategies and techniques found in *How to Talk so Kids can Learn at Home and in School* (Faber, Mazlish, Nyberg, Anstine Templeton, 1995). Finally, a closer look at the closest mean scores on the *SLEQ* should be considered to answer the following questions : why do teachers have a

higher mean score on the *Actual* rather than the *Preferred* forms in the area of Staff Freedom and how do teachers feel supported by each other ?

REFERENCES

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Alienation and the four worlds of childhood. *Phi Delta Kappan , 67 ,* 430-436.

Brendtro, L. K., Brokenleg, M., & Van Bockern, S. (1990). *Reclaiming youth at risk: Our hope for the future .* Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

Cantrell, M. (1992). Guest editorial. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Problems , 1 ,* 4.

David, L. & David, I. (1980). *Violence in our schools .* New York: Public Affairs Committee, Inc.

Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. C. Whittrock, (Ed.). *Handbook of research on teaching* (3rd ed., pp. 119-161). New York: Macmillan.

Faber, A., Mazlish, E., Nyberg, L., & Anstine Templeton, R. (1995). *How to Talk so Kids will Learn at Home and in School .* New York: Rawson Associates & Simon and Schuster.

Fraser, J. (1989). Assessing and improving classroom environment. What *Research Says to the Science and Mathematics Teacher , No . 2 ,* 1-8. Key Centre for School Science and Mathematics, Curtin University of Technology.

Fisher, D. L. & Fraser, B. J. (1990). Validity and use of the School-Level Environment Questionnaire. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Boston.

Flinders, D. J. (1987). *What teachers learn from teaching: Educational criticisms of instructional adaptation.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Standford University, Palo Alto, CA.

Fullan, M. with Stiegelbauer, S. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

Hanna ford, C. (1990). The brain gym option for hyperactivity, ADD, E.H., Sp. Ed., L. D. and FAS. Unpublished paper, Educational Kinesiology Foundation, Ventura, CA.

Harrington-Lueker, D. (1992). Blown away by school violence. *The American School Board Journal, 179,* 22-26.

Hatkoff, A. (1994). Safety and children: How schools can help. *Childhood Education ,*

70 , 283-286.

Hill, M., & Hill, F. (1994). *Creating safe schools What principals can do* . Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

Jones, V. F., & Jones, L. S. (1990). *Comprehensive classroom management* , 3rd ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Jones, V. F., & Jones, L. S. (1995). *Comprehensive classroom management : Creating positive learning environments for all students* , 4rd ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Kauffman, J. (1994). Violence and aggression of children and youth: A call for action. *Preventing School Failure , 38* , 8-9.

Long, N. J., & Duffner, B. (1980). Managing surface behavior of children. In Long, N. J., Morse, W. C., & Newman, R. G. (Eds.), *Conflict in the classroom.* (4th ed.) (pp. 233-241). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Molnar, A. (1992). Too many kids are getting killed. *Educational Leadership , 50* , 4-5.

Moos, R. H. (1987). Learning environments in context: Links between school, work, and family settings. In: Barry J. Fraser (Ed.), *The study of learning environments,* Volume 2. (pp. 1-16). Perth, Western Australia: Curtin University.

Natale, J. (1994). Roots of violence. *The American School Board Journal , 181* , 33-35, 38-40.

Nichols, P. (1992). The curriculum of control: Twelve reasons for it, some arguments against it. *Beyond Behavior , 3* , 5-11.

Parry, A. (1993). Choosing nonviolence in a violent world. *Young Children , 48* , 13-15.

Rotondo, D. (1992). Walking education's mean streets to curb school crime. *American School & University , 65* . 40-48.

Sauerwein, K. (1995). Violence and young children. *The Executive Educator, 17* , 23-26.

Smith, F. (1994). Fighting back. *The Executive Educator, 16* , 35-37.

Steinberg, A. (1991). How schools can help stem violence in today's youth. *Harvard Educational Letter , 7* , 1-2, 4-5.

Stephens, R. (1994). Preparing tomorrow's teachers. *School Safety , 3* , 1.

Wood, M.W., & Long, N.J. (1991). *Life space intervention : Talking with students in crisis* . Austin, TX : ProEd.